

WAR HERO 'SHADOWS' WAY TO FAME OVERNIGHT; TRAILS AND TRAPS \$2,500,000 SUPER-BANDIT

Playing a Lone Hand and in Momentary Danger of Death, Gordon McCarthy Wins Confidence of Robbers, Solving Thefts That Baffled Experts

POSING AS 'JIMMY,' A YEGG, HE WORMS SECRETS FROM BROADWAY HOLD-UP GANG

Learns of \$500,000 Loot Buried on Long Island, Offers to Sell Stolen Securities, Then Notifies Police and 'Gentlemen Bandits' Are Caught at Rendezvous

ALL the elements of melodrama, except the wholesale shedding of blood, are compressed in the recent experiences of a young overseas veteran who became a detective celebrity overnight. He solved robberies totaling \$2,500,000, included in which was the taking of \$1,500,000 in cash, jewelry and bonds from a mail truck on Broadway, New York, a daring coup that set a high-water mark for automobile banditry in this country.

Playing a lone hand and in momentary danger of a bullet in the brain or a knife in the back, he posed as a "yegg" from the West and gained the confidence of three men whom the police class as super-highwaymen. It was a case of "crossed trails." This keen, cool man-hunter was tracking down the men who stole \$70,000 from an American Railway Express Company truck when the trail broadened to bigger game.

Gordon T. McCarthy, a special agent of the American Railway Express Company, is the young detective who proves that the thrills of fiction are not foreign to everyday life.

At his home in Buffalo this modern Lecoq modestly related his great exploit. He did not talk freely. His attitude was that of a man who had tackled a hard job, who had done it well, and was ready for the next case.

McCarthy got his first taste of detective work as an army secret agent, serving at General Pershing's headquarters, and later going to London. He worked for a time with London's famous Scotland Yard.

To give background to McCarthy's achievement it is necessary to go back to the night of October 24, last year, when a mail truck rolled along Broadway with \$50,000 in cash and several million dollars' worth of securities.

As the truck passed under an arc light at Leonard street a green touring car containing three men drove alongside it. Two of the men leaped out and covered the mail driver with revolvers. In less than a minute they had taken five pouches of registered mail from the truck, tossed them into their automobile and sped away.

The robbers paid no attention to the ordinary mail and did not take other registered pouches, which later were found to contain non-negotiable securities. But by chance or foreknowledge, they took the sacks with the cash, the jewelry and the bonds which could be turned into currency.

Scores of Detectives Fail to Get Results
This Broadway hold-up, the first robbery of a mail truck in New York for many years, brought shoals of police and postoffice inspectors on the trail. But clues were scant and there were no results.

The incident that brought McCarthy into the case occurred in Niagara Falls on December 21, when motor bandits held up three express company employes and escaped with \$70,000 in securities and travelers' checks.

"I was detailed to that job," explained McCarthy as he sat on the veranda of his home in Buffalo. "The usual preliminaries were gone through. The company employes were questioned. Descriptions were obtained of the crooks.

"They had made a clean getaway and it seemed almost impossible to trace them through the car they used. One hope remained. That was in the appearance of some of the travelers' checks the bandits obtained. It was certain they or their confederates would try to cash them somewhere.

"I had information of certain gangs that were operating out of New York City. It was merely a matter of routine to go there and start the hunt. One of the checks showed up there in February.

"I traced a check to Charlie Fisher, who is said to have an international record as a forger, although he is about seventy years old. I had to work cautiously with Fisher, and I was soon convinced he knew nothing of the gang putting the 'paper' out.



GORDON T. MCCARTHY
Overseas veteran and former United States Army intelligence agent, who, working on a \$70,000 American Express Company robbery, ran to earth the super-highwaymen who held up a mail truck on Broadway, N. Y., and whose robberies are said to have netted them \$2,500,000.

dress. They had hundreds of good stories on tap and seemed typical men about town with plenty of 'jack' and a knowledge of the good things of life.

"Ten or twelve persons sometimes made up their parties. The women seemed unaware of the other side of their lives. 'The Count' could order a meal with the discrimination of a French dandy."

After his discovery that the three swaggering highwaymen were responsible for the mail truck hold-up, McCarthy got in touch with the New York detective bureau.

The time was coming for the "grand crash," the springing of the trap. Three detective sergeants, O'Brien, Stepat and Kiley, were assigned to cooperate secretly with McCarthy.

The young special agent had dropped hints to his three "subjects," as men under surveillance are termed, that he could easily dispose of securities. They took the bait.

After some parleying, "the Count" agreed to turn over \$21,000 of the bonds obtained in the mail robbery. He offered a 20 per cent commission, which McCarthy said he would split with a pal in Toledo who would actually place the engraved paper.

Learns Much of the Loot Is Buried on Long Island
During the many chats that the supposed "Jimmy" had with the men they mentioned that much of their loot was buried near Lake Ronkonkoma, Long Island. He dared not ask them for the exact location of the stolen treasure.

On Sunday, June 25, the "Count," the "Professor," the "Doctor" and McCarthy met in a New York hotel. Chapman, "the Count," drove up in his \$7500 motorcar.

To the casual eye of the doorman and raining heavily, but the four men set to work with picks and shovels.

Time seemed to roll back to the swashbuckling days of sea rovers and their buried treasures. As he dug McCarthy thought of doubloons and pieces of eight he had read about when a boy.

After ninety minutes of digging they uncovered a box containing \$500,000 worth of securities. Most of them were identified as part of the mail truck loot. Others were recognized as stolen from several other postoffice robberies.

and was promoted to sergeant. He went through the Argonne offensive and was shell-shocked.

The young soldier's record was so good that he was recommended for a commission. Then he was transferred from the 300th infantry to the army's Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

It was in that service that he learned to meet emergencies. His work brought him into many cities and towns in Northern and Southern France, and carried him across the Channel to England.

Handled Delicate Cases With Scotland Yard Men
In London he was assigned to several delicate cases and he got an "inside view" of Scotland Yard's methods.

Many a device of the detective's art he tucked away in his memory, ready to bring them forth for use when the need arose.

But wild horses, apparently, could not get McCarthy to talk about that part of his career. Perhaps he gained overseas the knowledge that enabled him to establish contact with "the Count." But McCarthy calls that achievement merely "a lucky break."

The three men now in the Tombs are not novices to prison life. Police records show that Chapman did "stretches" in Elmira and Sing Sing.

After the wagon had gone a short distance the bogus policemen drew two revolvers and ordered the driver to proceed to the outskirts of the city. There both postal employes were bound and gagged. The robber fled with all the registered mail.

The helpless mailmen were found an hour later. Inspectors placed bloodhounds on the robber's trail, but he got away.

A clue developed in New York City a few weeks later, and a man known as Thomas Donahue was arrested. The driver and the transfer clerk identified him as the supposed policeman who had hoodwinked them.

On August 18, 1920, Missouri Pacific train No. 4 left St. Louis and soon afterward halted at Tower Grove station. Four masked men boarded the train there and menaced the crew and passengers.

When the train got under way again two of the robbers stood guard while their comrades walked through to the mail car. One held revolvers at the heads of the clerks and the other took five registered pouches to the door.

The bandit then pulled the signal cord, and as the train slackened speed he threw the pouches off. The "go-ahead" signal then was given, after which the robber cut the cord. All four masked men then leaped from the train.

Three Highwaymen Trapped After a Similar Robbery
A few weeks later, when inspectors still were working on the Missouri Pacific robbery, a Chicago, Burlington and Quincy train was boarded by two robbers as it moved between Union, Pacific Transfer and the station at Council Bluffs, Ia.

The robbers forced their way into one of the mail cars and waited until the train made its regular stop at a crossing. Ten pouches then were tossed off. A confederate was waiting there with a motorcar. This confederate seized and drove off with five of the sacks, while the two hold-up men escaped with four others. The tenth pouch was recovered.

Later the inspectors arrested Keith L. Collins, the driver of the motorcar, who was sentenced to fifteen years in Leavenworth Prison. Fred E. Poffenbarger and Orville Phillips were arrested as the hold-up men and also got long terms in prison.

In another instance where the inspectors speedily captured the robbers \$180,000 in cash and securities were taken from a mail messenger at Mount Vernon, Ill. All the booty except a few dollars was recovered.

On the same day as the Mount Vernon robbery masked men held up the Jackson street postoffice at Dallas, Tex. The robbers mortally wounded a clerk and shot two other postal employes. They escaped with two registered pouches.

It was into this atmosphere of criminal recklessness that McCarthy plunged when he took up the trail of the Niagara Falls hold-up men. The reward he made in that case brought him to the front rank of the courageous men who match their wits with criminals in a game of desperate hazards.

Other Notorious Bandits Pygmies Besides Mail Gang

THE old stage coach robbers of the Western plains and England's eighteenth century "gentlemen of the road" shrink to pygmies in achievement compared with the highwaymen who looted a mail truck in New York City last October.

The truck contained registered parcels mailed by numerous brokerage houses in Wall Street. The mail pouches held \$50,000 in cash and \$4,000,000 in jewelry, stocks and bonds.

On the night of October 24 as the autotruck moved along Broadway it was halted by three bandits in a green touring car. The hold-up occurred at Leonard street.

In less than a minute the bandits had taken five registered pouches containing \$50,000 in cash and \$1,500,000 in jewelry, bonds and stocks. After the robbers dashed away in their car a curtain of mystery dropped on the big theft.

But behind the curtain worked Gordon T. McCarthy, a special agent of the American Railway Express Company. McCarthy, a young former service man, was working on another case when he came across the mail truck looters.

The special agent's account of his experiences on that case is a brilliant chapter in the history of crime detection.

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Uncommon Sense: The Young Man's Bugbear
By JOHN BLAKE
SAYS the youth: "I hate the thought of being bent over a desk all my life—to sit watching the clock to the end of my days, because of my dislike for the drudgery of the job."

The haunting fear that one must spend all his days at distasteful work is in the heart of many young men beginning life.

They see about them men who are old and discouraged, and who have been doing the same thing in the same uninteresting way for twenty or thirty years, with little or no promotion, and little laid up for old age.



After ninety minutes of digging they uncovered a box containing \$500,000 worth of securities.